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*A Prospect of a future Reward not inconsistent
with Virtue's being disinterested.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT
St. NICHOLAS's Church in *Newcastle*,
On *Thursday*, September 4. 1755.

AT THE
Anniversary Meeting of the Sons of the
CLERGY.

By ANDREW WOOD, M. A.
Minister of *Darlington* in the Bishoprick of *Durham*,
and Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of HAMILTON
and BRANDON.

Published at the Request of that SOCIETY.



L O N D O N:
Printed for A. MILLAR, in the *Strand*.
M.DCC.LV.

A Report of a Joint Review not inconsistent
with Virtue's being dissolved.

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MDCCLV.

ANTHONY KECK, Esq;

Of Great Tew, in Oxfordshire,

Member of Parliament for New-Woodstock;

The following SERMON is, with all Respect, inscribed, in *grateful* Acknowledgment of the highest Obligations to the late Lady SUSAN KECK, and to HIMSELF.

By his most devoted

most obedient

and most humble Servant,

AND. WOOD.

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P R E F A C E.

IT is but fair to own, that my Lord *Shaftesbury*, in a very explicate Manner, acknowledges the Usefulness of the Doctrine of future Rewards and Punishments, in particular Cases and to particular Men; and indeed, in general to all Men he allows a Prospect of *Reward*, provided the Reward hoped-for includes no more in it, than *the Love and Desire of virtuous Enjoyment, or of the Practice and Exercise of Virtue in another Life* *. Which is in Effect saying, That whatever is looked for as *positive* in this Matter (and something of this Kind the New Testament warrants us to expect) ought never to be applied, but in desperate Cases, such as his Lordship puts in the Pages referred to below. And even *here* he expresses some Fear, lest the Principle of Self-love should become too strong by the Exercise of the Passions in a *Subject of such extended Self-Interest*; “ For if the Habit (says he) be
“ such as to occasion, in every Particular, a

* Vol. II. p. 60. & seq.

“ stricter

“ stricter Attention to Self-good, and private
 “ Interest; it must insensibly diminish the
 “ Affections towards publick Good, or the
 “ Interest of Society; and introduce a cer-
 “ tain Narrowness of Spirit, which (as some
 “ pretend) is peculiarly observable in the de-
 “ vout Persons and Zealots of almost every
 “ religious Persuasion.” * If the Doctrine of
 a future Retribution be such a dangerous Me-
 dicine, it ought surely never to be applied,
 but in very desperate Cases *indeed*. It will be
 worth While to consider this Matter a little.

His Lordship himself founds the Obligation
 to Virtue upon its being the Source of Mens
 truest Happiness: And in proving this (which
 he does at some Length in his own masterly
 Way) he takes into the Account every Plea-
 sure and every Joy, which human Nature is
 capable of; and demonstrates, that to taste
 them in the highest Relish, a Man must be
 compleatly virtuous †. Here his Lordship
 plainly founds the Obligation to *Virtue* upon
Self-love; concluding the whole in these
 Words, “ And thus Virtue is the Good, and
 “ Vice the Ill of every one.” Where then,
 in the Name of Goodness, is the Danger of
 rendering that Principle too strong, upon

* Vol. II. p. 58. † lb. p. 77. & seq.

which our Obligation to Virtue is founded?
 --Upon another Occasion his Lordship could say *, " It is the height of Wisdom, no doubt, " to be rightly selfish." And so say we;-- the only Difference is, that his Lordship confines his Prospect to the Happiness and Misery resulting from right and wrong Behaviour, from the Constitution of Things in this present World; and we, as directed and informed by the Gospel, still look farther, carrying our Views beyond this Scene of Things to a future World; where the same right Behaviour, which is the Source of Happiness *here*, will be rewarded with an everlasting Happiness *hereafter*; and where the same wrong Behaviour, which is the Source of Misery *here*, will be doomed hereafter to Misery eternal.

The whole Matter seems to turn upon the Distinction, between *Selfishness* and Self-love. Selfishness, we own, is a very bad Character; it seems hardly consistent with any Degree of Virtue. His Lordship has well defined it †, " A more than ordinary Self-Concernment, " which is inconsistent with the Interest of " the Species or Publick." This is a Vice, and an odious one too, which proceeds from

* Vol. I. p. 121.

† Vol. II. p. 23.

Self-love ill-informed and ill-directed. But surely *it* may be better informed and directed; else why has his Lordship taken so much Pains, in the Second Book of his *Inquiry*, to anatomize the human Heart and Mind, and to shew, that the greatest Happiness possible here, in this World, arises from a due Order and Ballance between the private and publick Affections; each Class, without interfering, pursuing respectively the Interest of the Individual, and the Interest of the Species or Publick? If *Self-love* would only hearken to this good Lesson, *it* would soon learn to pursue far other Measures, than such as are *selfish*:—It would beget a just and regular *Self-Concernment*, not only perfectly consistent with, but conducive to, the Interest of the Species or Publick. And much more so, say we, if *it* would hearken to the revealed Word of the great Maker of the human Mind and Heart, which solemnly assures the World, that the same right Behaviour, which constitutes Mens greatest Happiness *here*, will hereafter be rewarded with an eternal Happiness in Heaven. Now, where is the Contrariety between the *Moralist's* teaching, and the preaching of *Divines*?—None that I can see: The only Difference is, that his Lordship rather chuses to
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stop short, and to leave the better Part of Virtue's Dower untold: I should rather say, chuses to keep it out of Sight, in order to enhance the *Merit* of Virtue. But if this enhances the Merit of Virtue, surely it would have enhanced it still farther, if his Lordship had been at less Pains to point out the Happiness resulting from it, from the Constitution of Things in this World; and still more, if he had left this Part altogether undone; and above all, if, turning the Tables, he had with equal Pains, and all his high Colouring, drawn the Calamities of *Job*, and so run down through History, sacred and prophane, with all the Persecutions, Distresses and Tribulations, which have at any Time befallen Men renowned for Virtue and Goodness. This would have compleated the *Disinterestedness*, and consequently the *Merit* of Virtue. If a Man were to sketch out such a Draught as this, and still keep the Reward of Futurity out of Sight,—his exhorting to Virtue, under such unfavourable Circumstances, would be deemed, by all thinking Men, a mere *Quixotism* in Morals. And as Virtue often has been, and (in such a World as this) often must be, in such unfavourable Circumstances, the

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drawing a Veil between us and the Mansions of Bliss, is surely something romantick.

In a Word, the Desire of Self-good can never rise too high in a Man, who knows, wherein his true Happiness consists; and the cherishing *true Self-love*, by a Prospect of future Happiness in a World to come, is the greatest Security to Virtue; — happen what will *here*, this support can never fail. This *Self-regard* is diametrically opposite to *Selfishness*: The first leads a Man to prune the Excrescences of private Appetite and Passion, and to cherish and foster up every Seed of good and natural Affection; — it leads him, by a thorough Discipline of the Heart and its Affections, to practise every private and every publick Virtue, as experiencing great Pleasure in the immediate Exercise, and still greater in the After-review and Love of *Virtue*; and (what crowns all) as habitually considering *all this* but as a *Fore-taste* of the Happiness, which awaits him in Heaven. *Selfishness*, on the other hand, perpetually leads a Man to narrow his Heart and Mind, and to draw an undue Share of the Conveniencies and Comforts of Life to himself; taking especial Care that he himself shall fare well, without any Regard to the Claim, which others

may have upon him, upon the Score of Charity or Hospitality. His own little Self, and the Brute-part of that same Self, he will, over and above, provide for and indulge, come of the rest of the World what will. *Now*, so far are his Lordship's Fears from being well-founded, *viz.* that a strict Attention to Self-good, in the Prospect of a Happiness in Heaven awaiting Virtue, may beget this *Meanness*,---this *Narrowness of Spirit*; that, on the contrary, Self-love thus well-directed, is the only Cure possible for it.

But what is absolutely conclusive in this Matter, is this; That the moral Faculty within us, or *moral Sense*, approves of virtuous Actions, under the peculiar View, of their being of *good Desert*; and disapproves of vicious Actions as being of *ill Desert*. Now, I ask, at whose Hands are we to deserve *Good* or *Ill*? Why surely, chiefly and principally at His, who gave us that Faculty. This every sound *Theist* must allow. This practical Power within us, therefore, can never operate in a Mind, which believes in a God, the Governor of the World, and habitually remembers *him*, but it must bring a Judgment to come in view. Here, in this World, there is no *equal Retribution* of that Kind, it must therefore

be hereafter.---Whilst every reflex Act of the Mind, in a moral Way, thus presages *Good*, or forebodes *Ill*, we can never keep this Matter out of Sight, but by commencing *Atheists*, or by calling back *Epicurus's* Gods. And as every reflex Act of this Kind, is, in truth, a Call to Self-love, to secure its own eternal Interest in a stedfast Adherence to Virtue; it is in vain to think of putting asunder (as if there was any Contrariety between them) two Things, which God hath thus joined together by that moral Faculty, which he gave us to be the Guide of Life.

In fine,---To resolve all *kind* and *social* Affection into *Self-love*, is the Madness of *System*, which delights (whether Nature will or not) in bringing all to one simple Principle.--We plainly have practical Principles within us, which carry us out of ourselves, to succour the Distressed, to relieve the Needy, or to benefit a Friend or Neighbour; --- Affections which seek the Good of another, and which rest in *that* Good as their End and Object. On the other hand, to cut off *Self-love* from being a proper *Principle*, or *Self-Good* from being a proper *Motive*, of *moral Discipline*, is the Madness of *Enthusiasm*, which, by soaring too high, is apt to lose Sight of mere
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Humanity, --- A Being capable of Happiness must pursue Happiness; and *Virtue's* grand Security, is a Belief that *it* leads to Happiness both present and future: and as it cannot be denied, that Matters have sometimes but a very *untoward* Appearance *here*, the *future* Reward of Virtue ought never to be out of Sight; indeed never can be out of Sight, where there is any the least Tincture of Religion: --- And even though these outward Appearances were out of the Question, if present Happiness has any Weight, future and eternal Happiness must have an infinitely greater Weight, as a Motive to Discipline, A right Knowledge and lively Faith *here* will strengthen every good and right Principle of Practice; --- will keep natural Conscience always awake; --- And, by rooting out of the Heart the Love of every little and mean Thing, will most effectually cherish and encourage the Love of Virtue itself. --- This is the Course of well-directed *Self-love* --- and therefore this is the Course of the *Sanctions* of the Gospel.

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Galatians, Chap. vi. Verse 9.

And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due Season we shall reap, if we faint not.

THE Context restrains the general Word, *Well-doing*, to *doing Good to others*, or *communicating to them in all good Things*: The Exhortation therefore of the Apostle is this, — that we should be diligent and hearty in doing Acts of Charity and Beneficence, for this most substantial Reason, — that if we persevere in this good Way, we shall, in due Season, (at God's own appointed Time) receive the Reward. The Harvest is still at a Distance, but we have the Word of Truth to assure us, that we shall most certainly *reap, if we faint not*. *As we have therefore Opportunity* (continues the Apostle) *let us do Good unto all Men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith*. Our Bounty and Charity ought to be as extensive as possible; with this Restriction, that the nearer Connexions of Life will claim a Preference. The Ties of Blood, and even of Country, are seldom over-looked;

it were well for the World, if Men were generally as ready, upon all Competitions, to give the Preference to the greater Degree of Distress. We have the Apostle giving the Preference here to the *Household of Faith*; and they were well entitled to it, both upon the Score of *Relationship*, and upon the Score of *Distress*. There is a plain Tie of Relation between Professors of the same Faith, — between Heirs of the same Promises: And then as to *Distress*, we observe, that, at that Time of Day, the Faithful were but few in Comparison, and the Arm of Flesh against them; they had therefore no Chance of Succour, but from their Fellow-Members of *the Household of Faith*. — In all similar Cases, where a Preference is fairly due, it ought to be given. We shall see, by and by, that the unhappy People, who give Occasion to this Day's Solemnity, have a very fair Claim of Preference upon all Clergymen upon the Score of a near *Relationship*; and upon them, and all other Christians upon the Score of great *Distress*.

It is remarkable, that the Apostle, in the Words of my Text, exhorts to this Virtue, in the very Terms of the old Moralists of *approved Name*. Τὸ καλὸν ποιοῦντες, (which we translate

translate *well-doing*) is the favourite Language of the several Branches of the *Socratic* School. They meant to express, that there was as real a Beauty in virtuous and good Deeds, as in the Symmetry and Proportion of outward Forms: And hence they took Occasion to persuade Men to the Practice of Virtue, as what would give Pleasure to the Mind upon Reflection, and leave a good Relish *there*. And, doubtless, it was a very sensible and important Topic of Persuasion in *Schools*, which were apt to consider a future State of Retribution, rather as a Matter of Inquiry, and of subtle Disputation, than as a practical Principle of Life and Manners: --- It was plainly appealing to the Mind of Man in a Matter that could not well admit of Dispute; --- What he felt, when he either reviewed his own Character, or the Character of another; And the Answer could not but be from every ingenuous and fair Mind, That *Virtue* was in itself *beautiful* and *lovely*, and *Vice* in itself *deformed* and *hateful*. So far was well at that Time of Day; — but *now*, under the Gospel Dispensation, by which *Life and Immortality are so clearly brought to Light*; --- to risque the Cause of Virtue upon the mere *Feelings* of Humanity, which

may be, nay often are, not only blunted, but almost extinguished, --- is just as wise, as it would be in civil Matters, to risque the Security of Property, not upon the *Sanctions* of the Law, and the Authority of the Magistrate, but upon every Man's Sense of the *Reasonableness* of what our Lawgivers have enacted. And yet such Wisdom we have had amongst us ; an open and declared Attempt of separating *Morality* from *Religion* ; nay, little less than a formal Declaration, that unless they be *divorced*, there can be no real Virtue.

The holy Apostle, we see, thought otherwise ; for at the same Time that He exhorts us τὸ καλὸν ποιεῖν, --- to act the *beautiful* and lovely Part in Life, He carries our Views on to a future Judgment, by assuring us, that *we shall reap, if we faint not* : Our good Deeds he would have us habitually consider as good Seed sown, which will produce a plentiful Harvest hereafter. --- But this the *enthusiastic* Moralist cannot away with ; --- it is to Him a Matter of mere Trade and Bargain. *A Christian gives to the Poor, it is true ; but it is in Expectation of being repaid the Sum lent, with Usury, at the final Judgment. Is this Virtue ? Is it praise-worthy ? Has it any Thing of*
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Desert? --- So that, in his Opinion, the doing Good to others in Expectation of a Reward hereafter, is the same Thing as sowing a Field in Expectation of a Harvest to come. Hence it is, that He perpetually imputes a *mercenary* Spirit to a Believer; and hence a perpetual sneering Ridicule, when he speaks of the *saving of Souls*, and of those *who act for their Soul's Sakes*, and make a careful Provision for hereafter*.

Virtue must be disinterested : --- We own it, *Self-interested Regards must therefore extinguish and destroy it* : --- This we deny. And the Duty now under our Consideration will give me the best Opportunity of setting this Matter in its proper Light; for a charitable Beneficence to the Poor, when done in a right Manner, is confessedly the most *disinterested* Act of Virtue: And if I can in any-wise shew, that a Hope of reaping the Reward of this Virtue, in no-wise affects the Nature of it, so as to render it less *disinterested*; --- I shall, I presume, clear the Way of this conceited Objection; and so, with good Grace, proceed to enforce the Apostle's Exhortation in my Text, *not to be weary in well-doing*, from

* Charact. Vol. III. p. 302.

the Prospect suggested by Him, of *reaping* the Harvest of our Labour of *Love* at G O D's own Time.

Now, in Order to this, I shall

First, Inquire in what the *Disinterestedness* of true charitable Beneficence consists.

Secondly, Point out the Way, how a Prospect of Reward may and ought to affect us, for the Furtherance of *this*, and of every other Virtue; —I mean, for the Furtherance of *Virtue* in the highest Sense, wherein human Virtue is capable of being *disinterested*, or can possibly be supposed to be *disinterested*. And having thus cleared the Way, I shall,

Thirdly, Endeavour to recommend the Objects, who now petition you through me, to your Benevolence:

Fourthly, State the Propriety of soliciting an annual Charity, such as this:

And, *Lastly*, Conclude with enforcing this Matter upon you, by the Weight of the momentous Motive suggested by the Apostle in my Text.

First, then, I am to enquire in what the *Disinterestedness* of true charitable Beneficence consists.

And, here we need not go far, to set this Matter in a clear Light. The Gospel has comprehended all Virtue in *Love*; the Love of God, and the Love of our Neighbour: And our Apostle in the 13th Chapter of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, accordingly declares, that the very Deed we are now considering, *Almsgiving*, will profit a Man nothing (that is, it is not a good Deed, nor will he be intitled to the Reward of it) if he have not *Charity* or Love in his Heart. *Tho' I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor* (says the Apostle)—*and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing*. It is the good Affection of Heart, which stamps Worth or Value on this and every other outward Act. We see only, it is true, the outward Act; and where there is a fair Appearance, we ought to presume the best: It is not our Province to judge our Brother. But still it is an important Truth, that, be the Action never so *fair* and *comely* in the Eyes of Man, yet it is but a *spurious* Virtue, if the Principle—if the Affection of Heart be *spurious*. I may be vain, and *give my Goods to feed the Poor* out of Ostentation: I may be ambitious, and do it to serve the Purposes of my Ambition: Nay, I may be of an indolent and easy Temper, and do it merely to rid my-
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self of the Clamour of an importunate Beggar:—These, and such like, are all spurious Principles, and are of no Value in *his* Sight, *who looketh not on the outward Appearance, but looketh on the Heart.*—The true and genuine Principle *here* is a compassionate Good-will to our Brethren in Distress; if the Heart be not affected in this good Way, there can be no *genuine* Virtue. Put the Case, that a Man of a contracted Heart, dead to *Love*, — dead to every kind and social Affection, is moved to *feed the Poor*, in hopes of reaping a Harvest in Heaven; if he does it in the very Spirit of an Usurer, and *lends his Money*, as he thinks, *to the Lord*, in the same Way, and with the same Disposition of Heart, that he would have lent upon a Bond, which promised an Hundred-fold at a distant Day;—his feeding the Poor is as void of Virtue, and as little deserves the Name of *Well-doing*, as the Traffick of the Usurer. I would not willingly suppose, that this Case ever happens; for who is so ignorant of what the Happiness of Heaven consists in, and of the Qualifications of Heart and Soul necessary for the partaking of that Happiness, as to form any such Scheme of purchasing it? All I mean is, that feeding the Poor will profit a Man nothing, unless he have a Fellow-feeling

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ing for them ;— unless he have Charity for them in his Heart.

Virtue is good Affections regularly exerted in outward Acts, according to each Man's respective Ability and Opportunity :— Good Affection gives the whole Worth and Value to the outward Act ; — nay, where there is no Ability or no Opportunity, the good Affection is itself *Virtue* :— But the outward Act produced at Hazard, or from a spurious Principle, is of no *moral* Value in the Sight either of G O D or Man. There can be no Self-applause, if the Heart be not rightly affected ; nor will the World applaud, if there be any Suspicion of unsoundness *there*. The World, it is true, may be imposed upon ; and a Man of a wrong-turned Head and Heart may perhaps deceive himself in this Matter : But it is impossible to deceive the great Searcher of Hearts ;— in his Sight, the Principle of *Charity*, and it only, is the *End of the Commandment*, and the *fulfilling of the Law*.

This Doctrine is of special Comfort to a good Heart and Mind ;— to be assured, that one's Virtue is *thus* independent of outward Circumstances. For, if the Heart give the

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Value to the outward Act, it follows, where there is equal Goodness of Heart, there is equal Virtue; provided all the Fruit appears in a Man's Life and Conversation, which his Ability enables him to shew forth: for that is the *Test* of a good Heart. In the Duty now under Consideration, it is plain, that Men's Virtue in real and hearty Almsgiving, is not in proportion to what they severally give; but in proportion to *that* compared with their Ability of giving. *For if there be first a willing Mind, it is accepted according to that a Man hath, and not according to that he hath not*, 2 Cor. viii. 12. There may be therefore, as much Virtue in the *Widow's Mite*, as in a Bounty of *ten thousand Talents*.

And now as to the *Disinterestedness* of this, or any other Virtue;—wherein does it consist? Why, in this;—That the outward Act proceed from its genuine Principle or Affection of Heart. In Acts of Bounty to the Poor and Neccessitous, there must be *Charity* in the Heart;—a Love which prompts you to their particular Good;—the End and Object of this Affection is their Relief and Welfare. If this Affection be wanting, then the Feeding the Poor must be an *interested* Action; it must be

as a Means of Self-gratification, and of that only.—In a Word; as an interested Action is *that* which proceeds either from the general Principle of *Self-love*, or from some particular *Passion*, whose End and Object is *Self-Good*; so a *disinterested Action* is *that* which proceeds from the general Principle of *Charity*, or brotherly Love, or from some particular Affection, whose End and Object is the *Good of another*. And as our Maker has implanted in our Hearts this general Principle of *Love*, and the subordinate Affections, which should incline us to rejoice with or pity our Brethren of Mankind, all social Virtue must proceed from this Principle or these Affections: As we ought to love God for his own Sake, so we must serve Man from an unfeigned Love for him.

This, as I understand it, is the *Morality* of the Gospel; which yet, at the same time, in numberless Places, and in a Variety of Lights, sets eternal Life and Death before us, in order to awaken our Minds, by the Hope of the *one*, and the Fear of the *other*, to regulate our moral Conduct. Nay, the Light of Nature teaches the same, tho' more obscurely; and what is still more intimate to us, the Voice of *Natural Conscience* speaks the same

Thing; presaging *Good*, or foreboding *Ill*, as the Consequence of right or wrong Behaviour. It must be strange then, if what some fanciful Men tell us be true, that the inculcating the future Reward of Virtue tends to render Mens Virtue *mean* and *mercenary*: That is, (as we must suppose them to mean) it either altogether, or in some Measure, renders Virtue an *interested* Act. Whether it does so or no, we shall now see; for, as I have endeavoured to explain to you in what the *disinterested* Nature of the Virtue of *Almsgiving* consists, I shall now,

Secondly, Point out the Way, how a Prospect of Reward may and ought to affect us, for the Furtherance of this, and of every other Virtue; I mean, for the Furtherance of Virtue, in the highest Sense, wherein human Virtue is capable of being *disinterested*, or can possibly be supposed to be *disinterested*.

I observe, then, that the Reward is offered, not by way of *Bargain*, merely to procure the outward Act; but as a Motive of *moral* Discipline, in order to draw Men, by a future Prospect, to clean and amend the Heart, and
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to renew *right* Dispositions within them. *Good Affection* was originally implanted in our Nature by our Maker, else no Prospect of Reward could raise it there; our Business is therefore to cherish the good Seed sown in our Heart at our first Formation; and the great Points of Faith, *the Immortality of the Soul*, — *a future State*, — *Rewards and Punishments*, are then rightly applied, when they work this good Effect.

In this *probationary* State, we have *the Lusts of the Flesh*, and *the Pride of Life*, and the Temptations of the Devil, all against us; and all of them tend to *narrow* the Heart, and to render it *little* and *selfish*. A bad Man has neither God nor his Neighbours in all his Thoughts. The Concerns of *another* Life throw Weight into the other Scale; — bring him only seriously to consider them, and *Sin* is no longer *deceitful*: His Heart enlarges, and he pays Homage to his God, and does Good to his Brother. This is, or ought to be, the Effect with every Man, who believes that Happiness is infinitely on the Side of Virtue.

And fallen as Man is, the Affection of *Charity*, which God hath sown in his Heart, would strike a deep Root, — it would grow
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and flourish into good Fruit, if he could be but once heartily persuaded, that its present and future Joy, are infinitely preferable to all the darling Pleasures of the *Men of this World*. An intimate, firm and habitual Persuasion *here*, with the help of God's Grace, will work Wonders in *creating Man anew*: — Take off but the Bias to Sense and sensible Things, (which gives the *Tempter* so great an Opportunity of captivating us to Sin) let us but once come to prefer the *Spirit* to the *Flesh*, — the present and future Joys of Virtue to the perishing and transitory Pleasures of Sin, and the *New-Creature*, required by the Gospel, will soon come to be formed in us. For in spite of all without us, — the Temptations of the Devil, and the Allurements of the World, — we still have the Heart and its Affections in our own Power; we can either cherish and improve the *good* Affections, and so draw them forth to Action, or neglect them, nay check and smother them, and cherish the *unnatural* Passions in their stead. The *Rewards and Punishments of Futurity* are therefore clearly held forth in the Gospel, as being the most momentous Motives to *religious* Discipline, that can possibly affect the Heart of Man, in order that, through Hope of the *one*, and Fear of

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of the other, he may be induced to give the *good Affections* fair Play, and so form them into Habits of producing good Fruit; and, on the other hand, to check and restrain the *lower Appetites* within the Bounds of *Nature*, and to root the *unnatural Passions* entirely out.

But is not this Chastisement of the Heart and its Affections, and the whole of this religious Discipline, an interested Act? Yes, doubtless; but that is nothing to the Question now before us. The Question is, if the Virtue produced by such a Discipline be an *interested Virtue*? and we answer, *No*; because it produces good Deeds, done from good and legitimate Affection; — from that *Charity, which seeketh not its own Good*, but the Good of another. In a word, the Motive here to religious Discipline is *Interest*; but the Principle of the virtuous Action is *good Affection*, cultivated and cherished by this Discipline; and Virtue so produced is *real and substantial*, and as *disinterested* as Virtue can possibly be supposed under the Government of a righteous and good God. I say this, because some Men's *moral Enthusiasm* takes such an *irreligious Turn*, that, to hear them talk, you would think, that *Virtue*, in their Opinion, could
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never be sufficiently *disinterested*, unless it were persecuted *here*, and look'd for nothing but Hell and Misery *hereafter*.

It is pleasant to observe, that they themselves offer nothing as a Motive to moral Discipline, but *Interest* or Self-good. And indeed what else can be offered to free Beings, who have a Sense of, and a Capacity for, Happiness? *Love Virtue for Virtue's Sake*, say they; *the Beauty of Virtue,—the moral Charm is a sufficient Motive to Discipline*. But after all, this *Beauty* or *Charm* comprehends in it the *Pleasure* naturally arising from the immediate Exercise of virtuous Affection, and the *Self-applause* and *Joy* of Mind, which arise upon an After-Review. And this therefore is equally an *interested* Motive to Discipline, as the Happiness of Heaven: They stand both upon the same Footing in that Respect.—*But the former*, say they, *always produces a sincere Virtue; for if there be the least Unsoundness the moral Sense will not approve*. So will the latter, say we, when rightly understood and applied; in as much as the Reward will be bestowed by a Judge, who looketh not on the outward Appearance, but looketh on the Heart.—*But then again the Joys of Virtue, which naturally spring from the Exercise of it, are, as*
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it were, Virtue itself; and therefore a Love of them is a Love of Virtue. Why, in the same Way, a Desire of the Happiness of Heaven, is itself the very *Temper of Virtue*;—It is a Desire to be always with God, discharging the sublimest Acts of Piety; and in the Company of good Angels and Men, discharging the highest Acts of Goodness and Love. So that turn the Matter to whatever Light they have been pleased to put it in, the Cause of Virtue is in no-wise affected by inculcating the Motives of the Gospel, in the Way they *fondly* suppose: And all, that the World would get by the Prevalence of this new-fashioned Doctrine, would be only the losing Sight of the *eternal* Reward of Virtue. A most *wise* Contrivance in a *degenerate* World!—to woo Men to Virtue, by stripping her of almost all her Dower.

To bring this Matter home to the Duty now under Consideration: Suppose a Believer (and it is what all Believers should do) cherishes the good Seed of *Charity* sown in his Heart at his first Formation, so as that *it* brings forth the good Fruits of *Well-doing* in the general Tenor of his Life and Conversation; in humble Hope, that, through the Merits of CHRIST, he shall *reap* the Reward of his Labour of *Love*, at

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God's own appointed Time:—Will these Visionaries say, that this is not Virtue?—True, genuine, *disinterested* Virtue, in every possible Sense that *Disinterestedness* can be applied to it? Here is the good Affection of Heart, (that *Charity, which seeketh not its own*) and here is the proper Exertion of it; and if a *good* Deed, done from *good* Affection be not Virtue in the *truest* Sense, I own, I am yet to learn. That the good Affection is quickened, enlivened and brought into Action, by a Prospect of future Happiness, can in no-wise alter the Nature of the *Affection*; no more than the watering a Plant can alter the Nature of the *Plant*. Indeed, if they will *wildly* suppose, that a Believer's Virtue is a Matter of mere Trade and Traffick, where *Love* has no Concern, they may go on to draw as *wild* Consequences as they please,—*that there is nothing in a Believer, but a mercenary Spirit*:—But how do they read the New Testament? What does it say? If they will please to look into it, they will see a *perfect* Love required there, which casts out every low and *selfish* Regard: And yet, at the same Time, *it* calls upon us, over and over again, to fix our Eyes stedfastly on a future Judgment, as the greatest Motive *possible* to induce us to discipline the Heart,
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and especially to water and cherish this good Principle, in order that it may habitually produce good Fruit.

Upon the Whole then; the Free-thinking Scoffer greatly mistakes the Matter, when he imputes a *mercenary* Spirit to a Believer. Were we to be judged, at the last Day, by a Man like ourselves, such a *mercenary* Outside-Virtue, as is imputed to us, might do the Business; but our Judge is God, who sees the Heart of Man, and, in his Word, expressly requires a Service of *Love, out of a pure Heart, and of a good Conscience, and of Faith unfeigned,* 1 Tim. i. 5.

And now having (I hope) cleared the Way of this conceited Objection, that the Virtue, and particularly the *Almsgiving* of a Christian is mean and mercenary, because he looks for a Reward *hereafter* for his Labour of Love *here*; I proceed, as I at first proposed,—(under this right Sense of Things, that we shall *reap* our Harvest of Reward, if we persevere in *Well-doing*.)

In the *third* Place, To recommend the Objects, who now petition you, through me, to your *Christian* Benevolence.

They are the Widows and Children of Clergymen, sunk in Poverty and Want, not

by their own Fault, nor by the Fault of the Husband and Father, whom they have lost; (if there be any Instances to the contrary, it is to be hoped, they are but few) —but, in general, by the *scanty* and *mean* Provision appropriated to the Cure of Souls in too many Places of this Kingdom; a *Meanness of Provision* greatly to be regretted: For while Men are Men, low Circumstances will bring a *contemptuous* Neglect upon a very good Man, and lessen the Weight and Importance of every Thing he says, — of every Thing he does: And I make no Question, but that an innocent Compliance with this perverse Humour of the World, has made many a Clergyman (whose Widow or Child now begs to be fed by your Bounty) run into Expences in his Manner of Living, which, but for the good Intention, would have been *unnecessary*, perhaps *inexcusable*.

I observed, in the Beginning of this Discourse, from the Authority of the Apostle, that, tho' all Men are intitled to our good Offices, yet a particular *Connexion* and *Relationship*, or particular Circumstances of *Distress*, may beget a Preference in Favour of particular Persons: And to such a Preference the Widows and Children of poor Clergymen are

are intitled, with all who now hear me; — with the Clergy upon the Score of a near *Relationship*; and with them, and all other Christians, upon the Score of great *Distress*.

Their Relation to the Clergy, it is to be hoped, we have all a full Sense of: I am sure, the rest of the World sees the Connexion in so strong a Light, that if we should at any Time seem to forget it, they would not fail to put us in Mind with some *Keenneſs* of Reproach. *They would tell us*, that after providing *decently* for ourselves and Families, the Surplus of *ecclesiastical* Revenues ought to be laid out in Works of *Charity* and *Beneficence*; and especially in relieving the *crying* Wants of the *Widows* and *Children* of our deceased Brethren, who, perhaps with equal *Merit*, and generally with a laborious Discharge of a heavy Duty, hardly had Bread while living, much less aught to leave at their Death. — *They would tell us*, that the Gospel, which we preach, distinguishes the Relief of the *Widow* and *Fatherless*, by the *high* Character of *pure* and *undefiled* Religion; and that therefore it becomes us to be *liberal* and *exemplary* in this good Way; more especially, when the *Distress* is brought so *home* to ourselves by *Relationship*, as in the Case now before us. — This
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and much more, we know, they will be ready to say, if we should give any the least Occasion for it, by a *seeming* Backwardness to promote so good a Work.

But let us wave an Application so particular, and come to those Circumstances of *Distress*, which give the Families of poor Clergymen deceased, a Preference with all *Christians*.

Clergymen, by their Office, are intitled to a Rank in Life, which the *Income* of the lower Clergy but very ill suits with. A *liberal* Turn of Mind and Manners (derived from a good Education) enables them, in some Measure, to support this Rank, which is so very *disproportionate* to their Circumstances. This must by Example descend to their Children, and *tincture* the whole of their Life and Behaviour. The natural Consequence of *this* must be, an Ambition to enter into Life, so as to *maintain* the Rank they were *born* to: And hence the many fruitless Endeavours to get their Bread in Ways, rather *liberal*, than *lucrative*. This may be reckoned *Imprudence*; but still it is an *Imprudence*, which admits of great Apologies. All, who have been born in a *genteel* Rank in Life, know well what may be said in Excuse for it; — and all such will
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also particularly *feel* the Truth of what I now say; that the *Evils* of Want and Poverty fall upon such kind of People with a Weight and Pressure, which others, born in lower Life, feel nothing of. The mere *natural* feeling of Hunger, is the same to the *Prince* and the *Peasant*; but over and above there is a particular *Bitterness* in Want, which is generally tasted in exact Proportion to the Rank of Life one is fallen from. The Compassion of all well-disposed People keeps pace with it; for who would not be more deeply affected with a *Belisarius* begging an Alms, than with the clamorous Importunity of one, born to Rags and Poverty?—A greater Degree of *Compassion* vouchsafed in the *one* Case, than in the *other*, supposes a greater Degree of *Misery* felt by the *one*, than the *other*; and even justifies it from any Imputation of *Weakness*: for Weakness of Mind oftner excites *Contempt*, than *Compassion*.

If we add to this, that it is the *Widow and Fatherless* (the most helpless and forlorn of all the Conditions of human Life) who are thus *fallen*; and who, without your *charitable Assistance*, must now feel the whole *Bitterness* of Want;—if we add this, we say all that
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need be said, to stir up your *Bowels* of Compassion for them.

4. As to the Propriety of soliciting an *annual* Charity, such as this, (which was the *fourth* Particular I proposed to speak to) I observe, that it is highly proper, whither we consider the *Objects*, or the *Contributors* there-to.

1st, As to the *Objects*; they may justly say, *We cannot dig; to beg we are ashamed.* The *meaner*, and more laborious Employments of Life, which might seem to suit the *Meanness* of their Circumstances, they are altogether unfit for, either from the *Impotency* of Age or Childhood, or from the Manner of their Education;—and as to the common Arts of *Begging*, they can hardly be supposed to give into them, while the Memory of *Husband* or *Father* is dear unto them. This is not a *false*;—it is an *ingenuous* Shame. It is highly proper therefore, that the Relief, which their *Modesty* restrains them from asking, should be solicited by others, who can do it with a better Countenance. Besides, to a *liberal* Mind, an Alms given in a *liberal* Way has a *double* Sweetness; and it is not easy to conceive a more liberal Way of relieving *modest Indigency*, than the Way now before us.

2dly, As to the *Contributors* thereto; I observe, that many a Man's good Disposition to Acts of Humanity is damped by his *small* Ability of doing Good. The miserable Objects, which daily present themselves to one's View, are so many, that very few are able to contribute to their Relief in any effectual Manner. Where the *Ability* therefore is but small, there is Danger of its being lost to the World, by *Compassion's* being drawn different Ways, at the same time, by so many different wretched Objects:—All cannot be relieved, and hardly any small Part to any considerable Purpose. This throws a Damp upon many a Man's *Charity*, whose Disposition is very good, but his Ability very small.—It is well, if Men are not sometimes a little *selfishly* partial in their Estimate, and reckon their Ability smaller, than it really is:—But be it never so small, you have *here* an Opportunity of exerting it to good Purpose;—the Plan of Charity, now before us, opens a Way for the *smallest* Stream to flow into a right Channel: For even where the Ability cannot reach so far, as to make the *Heart of one Son of Affliction* glad; still if there be a good Disposition, a Person may *here* unite with others equally well-dis-

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posed, and by adding *Mite* to *Mite*, produce something equal to the Wants of *many*.

There is another great Advantage in Charities, conducted upon a Plan, such as *this* now before us; — That the Distribution is made in a more equal Manner, and more proportionate to the Distress of each individual, than if the Contributors were to bestow their Bounty upon their Neighbours and Acquaintance. In that Way, some would *fare well*, while others were ready to perish for Want: Whereas *here* the *Degree* of Calamity is the only Recommendation. — And here I cannot but take Notice of the Countenance given to this Charity by *one* eminently good Man*, — The *Stewards* acting by his Counsel and Advice, and, in the Distribution of the Money collected, *immediately* under his Eye, — must recommend the Charity to all, who have an Alms to give, much more effectually, than any thing I can say on this Head.

5. It remains now, that I conclude with enforcing this Matter upon you, by the Weight of the momentous Motive suggested by the Apostle in my Text, *viz.* That *in due Season we shall reap*, if we persevere in doing Acts of *Kindness* and *Charity*.

* The Archdeacon of Northumberland.

The Words, *in due Season ye shall reap*, plainly refer the Reward of *well-doing* to a future World:—And yet, doubtless, the Motives to Charity and Beneficence are both *many* and *great*, which arise from the Constitution of Things in this present World:—There is the *Blessing* of all Men's *good Will* and *good Wishes*:—There is the Voice of *honest Fame*:—There is the *Joy of Heart*, which *immediately* results from the Exercise of Love and Pity;—and there is a still greater Joy from the Approbation of *natural Conscience*. These *may* and *should* have their Weight; and they are all fairly suggested to us by the *τὸ καλὸν ποιεῖν*, the *pulebrum*, or *honestum facere*, of the Apostle: But still to secure the Interest of this, or of any other Virtue, there must be an *habitual* Sense of our acting under the Eye of a Holy God, who will in *due Season* come and reckon with us, and will bring his *Reward with him, to give to every Man, according as his Work shall be.*

The Necessity of this appears in nothing stronger, than in the *Virtue* now before us. Generally, at our first Step into Life, we are wonderfully sensible of *Character*, and of the Regard of others towards us: And the Heart is then, for the most part *tender* and *compassi-*

onate, and open to every Joy, which *thence* arises. This is so true, that we hardly ever *then* form Schemes of great Prosperity and Wealth, and by the Power of *Fancy*, place ourselves in *actual* Possession, but we please ourselves in a very virtuous Use of them; dealing out, with a very *liberal* Hand, to our Relations, our Friends, our Neighbours, and especially to such of them as are poor and necessitous. Any thing of a good Heart will please itself for Hours together, in the Exercise of this *visionary* Virtue; and one would think, it bids fair for a *real* Virtue, if ever such Prosperity and Wealth should *really* become its Lot.—But how notorious is the contrary! If the wished-for Wealth comes *soon* in Life, it becomes generally an Instrument of mere *sensual* Pleasure;—if *late*, it is as generally employed to the Purposes of mere *Avarice*. And *thus* Character and a good Name;—the Heart-felt Joy of doing good,—and the Applause of Mind resulting therefrom, are *sacrificed* to a very *low* Pleasure, or to a very *unnatural* Passion. The Regards of Religion, it may be said, are *often sacrificed* in the same Way; I answer No, where they are *firmly* believed, and *habitually* reflected on: Men cannot *trifle* with the Favour or Displeasure of God,

God, with eternal Happiness or Misery, in the Way they certainly do *trifle* with the Opinion of the World, and with the *natural* Feelings of their own Mind. The Man of *Pleasure*, and the Man of *Avarice* will tell you, (and I believe *truly*) that they despise equally the Reproach of the *World*, and the Reproach of their own *Mind*: But they cannot despise Heaven and Hell, if they know what they mean; and, at the same Time, assuredly expect, that one or other must be their Lot. Men indeed may *believe* in some Sort, and yet afterwards drown all Sense of religious Matters by keeping the Mind otherwise engaged; but they cannot keep the *Sanctions* of the Gospel *habitually* in Mind, and yet make *light* of them:---They must have their Weight.

Let us therefore, on the present Occasion, remember, that we are only *Stewards* under the *great Householder*, who will most certainly *come and reckon* with us; and will reward or punish in an *everlasting* World, according as we have, or have not, the Talent committed to our Charge, to his Glory and to the Good of Men.

And here, it deserves to be remarked, that of these, who have a Sense of Religion upon their Minds, some seem to have no higher
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Aim or Ambition, than merely to *escape* the Sentence of Condemnation, and to enter into Heaven. They do not consider (or the Consideration has no Weight with them) that in Heaven there are *several Mansions*, differing in Degree of Happiness; which will be *severally* allotted among the *Candidates* for *Bliss*, in Proportion to each Individual's *Progress* in *Virtue*. *The Judge of all the Earth will do what is right*;—what is just and equal; proportioning the *Reward* to the *Work* done. Accordingly with regard to the Duty now under our Consideration, we are expressly assured by the Apostle, *That he, which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he, which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully*. So, that in the same Proportion as we *sow* the good Seed of *Charity* *here*, in the same Proportion shall we *reap* the Harvest of *Reward* *hereafter*.—This is the greatest Inducement possible to us, *not to be weary in Well-doing*.

There is another Reflection on this Subject, which we shall do well if we attend to, *viz.* the particular *Blessedness* which awaits the Charitable and Beneficent.—The doing Good to others in Distress is a *distinguished* Virtue; it stands forth in the *Front* of all the social Virtues, and as such will be rewarded in a *distin-*

distinguished Manner. To impress this the more strongly on our Minds, our Lord, in his Description of the Proceedings at the great Day of Judgment, represents the Issue of *that* Judgment, as turning chiefly on this *single* Article, whether Men have been merciful and compassionate to their Brethren in Distress. Come (says our Lord) *ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in Prison, and ye came unto me. — Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me. — A Virtue so distinguished by our Lord, as that he will impute it as exercised towards himself, cannot but receive a distinguished Reward.*

We are solemnly assured, that, at that great Day, every *Work* will be brought into Judgment; ---still however we learn from these Words of our Lord, that the principal Inquiry will be concerning this Fruit of our *Christian* Love and Charity. If one were asked a Reason for this Procedure, the Answer, I think, would be obvious, —that a *charitable* or *uncharitable* Temper

Temper is the *ruling* Part of a Man's Character;—It is the best *Test* of his whole inward Frame and Disposition;—and it is *that*, with which all other Virtues or Vices *respectively* are almost necessarily connected.

Hence *Daniel* represents Charity as the best Mark and Evidence of the Truth and Sincerity of our *Repentance*; *Break off thy Sins by Repentance*, says the Prophet to the King of *Babylon*, and *thine Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the Poor*.—And in other Parts of Scripture great Things are spoken of this Virtue: *Blessed are the merciful*, says our Lord himself, *for they shall obtain Mercy*: And *Charity*, says *St. Peter*, *shall cover the Multitude of Sins*. What the *precise* and *full* Importance is, of what is here promised in these Words of *St. Peter*, it may be perhaps hard to say; but still from them (compared with other Places of Scripture) we may *safely* conclude thus much, That frail and sinful Man ought to entertain a high Respect for this Virtue, as what will be of *grand Importance* at the Day of Judgment,—as what will plead for *Mercy* to him in that great Day, when he will most stand in Need of it.

And as the Promises to this Duty are thus *inviting*; so, on the other Hand, are the Threat-

Threatnings to the Neglect of it most *alarm-
ing*: That he shall have Judgment without
Mercy, who shewed no Mercy: And that, whose
stoppeth his Ears at the Cry of the Poor, he also
shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. Hear
also the Sentence pronounced by our Lord
against the uncharitable, *Depart from me, ye
cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the
Devil and his Angels: For I was an hungred,
and ye gave me no Meat; I was thirsty, and ye
gave me no Drink, &c.*—

And now to conclude;—As there is no
Man, but who *sometimes*,—as there is no *se-
rious* Man, but who *often*,—looks forwards,
with great Anxiety of Mind, to that *awful*
Event, a future Judgment;—and as what we
conceal from the *World*, and would fain con-
ceal from *ourselves*, is then apt to *stare* us in
the Face, and make us break forth with the
Psalmist; If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark
what is done amiss; O Lord, who may abide it?
—In these *solemn* Minutes, with Death---with
Judgment full before us, what a *mighty* Con-
solation must it be, to be able, *honestly* and
with a good Conscience, to say with *Job*; I
delivered the Poor, that cried, and the Father-
less, and him that had none to help him. The
Blessing of him, that was ready to perish, came
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upon me, and I caused the Widow's Heart to sing
for Joy. I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to
the Lame: I was a Father to the Poor!---And
this mighty Consolation we may all have, if
we have only a good and a kind Heart, and, on
this and all other proper Occasions, give our
Alms chearfully according to our Ability, be it
great or be it small.

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